

# JEW IN THE CITY

*orthodox. unexpected.*



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## Joining a Hated People: My Journey of Conversion and Becoming an Orthodox Jew

Last week, we learned that Jewish babies — the Bibas boys — could be murdered in cold blood, and countless people around the world would justify it. It's just like the Holocaust,

when much of the world seemed to turn a blind eye to antisemitism, or straight up approve of it.

Despite the fact that never again is now, I do not regret my decision to join the Jewish people. The hate is nothing new. I was well aware of it going into my conversion process.

Years ago, I was at my local Chabad, sitting across from a 90-year-old Holocaust survivor, telling her how I was in the process of converting to Judaism.

“Why would you want to join such a hated people?” she asked me.

“I don’t feel like it’s a choice,” I told her. “I feel it in my soul, like I’m coming home.”

In 2015, I converted to Judaism. Previously, I was an atheist who came from a secular Christian family. We celebrated X-Mas and Easter but didn’t do much else.

When I started dating Daniel, my boyfriend at the time – now husband – he took me to a Chabad for Friday night dinner. He had been going after stepping away from observant Judaism for over a decade. It helped him connect to his roots without feeling the pressure to become religious again.

As I sat at the table at the Chabad among a group of friendly Jews of all ages and backgrounds and heard the rabbi share words of wisdom, I felt a warmth in my chest I had never felt before. I knew this was God, and I had to follow this feeling.

I ended up embarking on a five-year conversion process, which I completed through an Orthodox beit din. Throughout it, people like the Holocaust survivor would question my decision. They thought I was out of my mind for not only wanting to be a Jew but wanting to be a committed and visible Orthodox Jew as well.

“They said all converts’ souls were at Sinai, where they also received the Torah,” I would say in response. “My soul traveled all the way here.”

When I went to the mikvah to dip and officially become a Jew, the rabbi asked me, “If there was another Holocaust, would you stay with the Jewish people, or would you leave?”

I said, “I would stay. And I would fight.”

I knew antisemitism was real, as I’d experienced it a few times throughout my conversion process. There was the woman who made a joke that her father was cheap and would “Jew people down,” and the man on the airplane who saw my book called, “What Do Jews

Believe?” and asked me in a defiant tone, “Well, what DO the Jews believe?” as his wife held his arm and said, “Oh honey, please.”

I also thought the Holocaust happened long ago and could never happen again, but October 7 proved that it could.

My immediate reaction to that tragic, horrible day was to stay and fight, being visibly Jewish in public, speaking out for Judaism and Israel, and working harder than ever to combat antisemitism—especially on social media, where I received so many hateful messages.

I am prouder than ever to be a Jew, even though we are so hated. Why? It’s not our fault we are hated – it’s the antisemites’ fault. My attitude is, let me live my life, practice my Judaism, and stand up for what’s right. And if you hate me for it, well, that’s your problem. That’s a sickness that has nothing to do with me.

The Jewish people’s mission is to bring God’s love and light into this often bleak and dark world. However, there are those who want to try to make the world a depressing, evil place. When confronted with God’s light, they fight it as forcefully as they can, even if it means destroying themselves in the process. That’s the enemy we have been dealing with since October 7 and throughout history. Nothing has changed.

But what can change is our attitude. Instead of letting it stop us in our tracks, instead of letting it get us down, we can respond by being prouder than ever, by being joyful in the face of darkness, by continuing our mission when others want to stop us in our tracks. If they’re going to hate us anyway, then let’s be our full and proud Jewish selves.

I will never regret my decision to be part of the world’s most hated group of people throughout time. I will never turn my back on my Jewish brothers and sisters. When we need it the most, when we need every Jew to rise up, I will stay.

And I will fight.

<https://jewinthecity.com/2025/02/joining-a-hated-people-my-journey-of-conversion-and-becoming-an-orthodox-jew/>